



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone

MINUTES

December 16, 2021, 5PM

Members present: Zoe Iacovino, Ben Echevarria, Ona Ferguson, Emily Monea, Laura Pitone, Beverly (Bev) Schwartz, Crystal Turner, Kat Rutkin, Jessica Lieberman, Meagan Benetti, William (Bill) White

Members not present: Lucas Schaber

Staff attending: Anna Corning, Hope Williams, Collins Center - Elizabeth Corbo, Collins Center - Steve McGoldrick

Guests attending: Thomas Peake (Easthampton), Daniel Gilbert (Easthampton), and Jesse Crafts-Finch (Amherst)

Other attending: Carol, Klaus Schultz, David Booth, Jack Perenick, Pat Cain, Kate Kavanagh, Peter Olszowka, Rachelle, Barry Rafkind, Crystal Huff, Dan Rourke, Daphne Jochnick, Greg Dennis, Karen Gardner, H Severino, Joel Thibault, Barbara LaBombard, Eric Schwartz

Meeting started at 5:05PM

Decisions:

1. Committee approved minutes from 12/2.
 - a. Eight 5s
2. Committee approved including signature requirements in Article 7 - Elections of the charter.
 - a. Ten 5s
3. Committee approved drafting the mayoral signature requirement at 250 signatures, the same requirement as the current charter.
 - a. Ten 5s
4. Committee approved drafting the at-large city councilor signature requirements at 100 signatures, lowering the requirement from the current charter.
 - a. Nine 5s
 - b. One 4
5. Committee approved drafting the ward city councilor and school committee member signature requirements at 50 signatures, lowering the requirement from the current charter.
 - a. Ten 5s
 - b. One 4
6. Committee voted to table the Ranked Choice Voting conversation until the next meeting in January.
 - a. Ten 5s

- b. 1 abstain
- 7. Committee voted to *not* include ward-specific signature requirements for the mayor and at large candidates in the charter.
 - a. Ten 5s

The committee uses the Fist to Five method of voting, a technique for gauging consensus. Voting ranges from 0 to 5. The scale is: 0 - no way, 1 - major issues to be resolved now, 2 - minor issues to be resolved now, 3 - minor issues to be resolved later, 4 - comfortable with this as it is, 5 - love this and will champion it. 0-2 is considered a lack of consensus, while 3-5 is considered consensus.

NOTES

1. Welcome 5:03
 - a. Anna welcomed the committee and community members.
 - b. Ona led an icebreaker, where committee members went around and shared their favorite thing about the upcoming holiday season.
2. Approve 12/2 Minutes 5:09
 - a. **Meeting minutes from 12/2 were approved.**
3. Public Comment 5:10
 - a. Committee heard public comments on voting systems from Jack Perenick (RCV), Crystal Huff (RCV), Dan Rourke (RCV), Peter Olszowska (single transferable vote), and Barry Rafkind (approval voting).
4. Deliberation Topic 1: Signature Requirements for Ballots 5:23
 - a. Committee deliberated previously tabled signature requirements and expressed the importance of making sure requirements are as low as possible. The sense of the room is that the committee thinks the best thing to do would be to keep signature requirements in the charter itself, as it is a value for the committee to keep it low to create easier entry for candidates.
 - i. **Committee approved including signature requirements in Article 7 - Elections of the charter.**
 - b. Regarding specific numbers, the committee deliberated if the numbers should stay the same or be lowered. Laura Pitone explained the amount of time it takes for people to get ~50 signatures for context, explaining it is a lot of work to get signatures. Bill mentioned he only knows of one person who could not achieve the requirements in his time as an elected official. The committee decided to vote on specific numbers for each office.
 - i. **Committee approved drafting the mayoral signature requirement at 250 signatures, the same requirement as the current charter.**
 - ii. **Committee approved drafting the at-large city councilor signature requirements at 100 signatures, lowering the requirement from the current charter.**

- iii. **Committee approved drafting the ward city councilor and school committee member signature requirements at 50 signatures, lowering the requirement from the current charter.**

5. Deliberation Topic 2: Consider Alternative Voting Systems 5:50

- a. Committee heard two short presentations, the first from Dan Gilbert and Thomas Peake of Easthampton, a city which implemented Ranked Choice Voting in their most recent election. The second presentation was from Jesse Crafts-Finch of Amherst, a city which is in the process of implementing Ranked Choice Voting. The committee asked questions about challenges, implementation, and how their RCV process related to charter.
- b. Committee deliberated alternative voting systems, and recognized the gravity of this topic compared to previous topics. The committee recognized the enthusiasm of the community and the importance of acknowledging Somerville residents' passion for this topic. The committee considered implementing a task force versus putting it into the charter, but wanted more time to consider options.
 - i. **Committee voted to table the Ranked Choice Voting conversation until the next meeting in January.**

6. Deliberation Topic 1 Continued: Ward-Specific Signature Requirements

- a. Committee deliberated adding ward-specific requirements to at-large positions, which represent all of Somerville. Multiple members expressed concern about this, explaining this adds a burden to the candidates trying to run for office. Bill White was especially against this change. Ben Echevarria explained this would hinder communities of color from running and make it harder for candidates.
 - i. **Committee voted to *not* include ward-specific signature requirements for the mayor and at large candidates in the charter.**

7. Community Engagement: Community Survey Feedback 6:50

- a. Crystal Turner, a member of the community engagement working group, explained the purpose of the community survey. The committee was supportive of having a wide scale survey. The working group asked for any feedback on the community survey draft questions, and multiple committee members expressed the importance of making sure the survey will be implemented equitably and written in a neutral way.

8. Closing:

- a. Anna thanked everyone and reminded them the next meeting is January 13th.